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## **Preface**

Hi everyone! Being largely self-taught throughout my entire Go journey so far, I have gained most of my knowledge through reading books. Below is my personal book list of books I've owned or read throughout my ~7 years of playing Go. I don't remember a ton of specific info about each book (and it would be way too time-consuming to take each one back out and browse through them), but I do remember some interesting stories about them. At the end of each book I have a rating and a rank range unless stated otherwise that I think is suitable. I have the books roughly arranged by language and level order/series. I hope you find this informative and the side stories interesting!

I got my books from a variety of sources, including [Tiger's Mouth](#) monthly tournaments, local tournaments, online, bookstores in China, and the vendors (Kiseido/Yutopian, Slate and Shell, Baduktopia) at annual US Go Congresses. If I were to estimate how much I/my parents spent on Go books, it'd be around \$750. I also had gotten a number of books as prizes from tournaments. \$750 might sound like a lot, but over 7 years it's only a little over \$100 per year, which isn't too much for a child's Go education if you compare it to music lessons or a sport, which most children participate in.

A quick note before we begin: This is not intended to be ~100 book reviews, but rather a compilation of my experiences and memories with each book as I remember them. I know that you may not have a lot of disposable money to be spending on Go books, so hopefully this list can help you narrow down your choices or highlight books that I thought were really helpful towards becoming a stronger player. Of course, I don't own every Go book ever published, so if you have any questions about any books not on this list, let me know and I'll try to help you out. :)

Lastly, please read the epilogue at the very end for my compilation of most valuable books to become stronger!

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## Introductory Books

### Teach Yourself Go—Charles Matthews

My first Go book! I remember coming back from swim practice one day and my mom telling me she bought it from Barnes and Noble. This book is actually a pretty good and comprehensive introductory book. It goes over a lot of the basic principles a beginner should know from all parts of the game. Solid book. 9/10; 30k-15k

### Learn to Play Go Series—Janice Kim and a couple others

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#### Volume 3: The Dragon Style

This book basically goes over some shapes and then gives examples of pro games. Imo it wasn't really that beneficial outside of just getting some exposure to certain shapes and names though. The examples were ok, but I don't think beginners would digest much that would be directly relevant to their own games. 4/10; 20k-10k; wouldn't particularly recommend

#### Volume 4: Battle Strategies

In contrast to volume 3, this book was a lot better! It goes over basic tactical maneuvers that appear frequently in games. I think this was the second Go book I owned, and probably brought me from 17k to 13k or so. Like I say almost everywhere else, technique is everything in lower-level Go (and still the primary factor of games through 5d), and this book does a decent job at introducing basic tactics. 7.5/10; 20k-10k

#### Volume 5: The Palace of Memories

I actually bought this book together with volume 4 at Barnes and Noble. This book talks more about opening principles, and while it's certainly not a bad book, I can't say it was as concise and educational as Opening Theory Made Easy by Otake Hideo (which I don't own but have read part of). Basically the book explains some principles, gives some examples of pro games, and has some problems towards the end of the book. That said, I think this book did help me a lot in getting from 13k-10k. 7/10; 15k-10k

## Lessons in the Fundamentals of Go

\*\*\*Lessons in the Fundamentals of Go—Toshiro Kageyama\*\*\*

Ok, this book is definitely one of the most memorable and the cream of the crop (hence deserving its own section. It's a totally solid book that covers so much ground about fundamentals in practically all areas of the game and is so much fun to read with Kageyama's entertaining language. You can read it over and over again and not only remain engaged, but get something new out of it. 10.5/10; 15k-5d

## Elementary Go Series—James Davies and a few others

### Volume 3: Tesuji

This book was really decent as a good survey of tesuji past the techniques in the Learn to Play Go volume 4. It basically goes through a number of tesujis in explanations before presenting some application problems at the end of each chapter. Budding sdk players can definitely get a good chunk of knowledge from this book. 8/10; 8k-5k

### Volume 4: Life and Death

This was the first book I never finished. In fact, I haven't opened it in quite a long time. That said, it is not a useless book, rather just extremely dry. It presents a lot of a different shapes using a status approach (dead/unsettled/alive), which honestly in my opinion is a really good method for teaching life and death. However, back when I was younger, I didn't quite have enough patience for this approach and ended up dropping it halfway. Maybe I'll take it out and go through it again to refresh myself and my shape intuition. Again, this is really not a bad book, but you might get bored reading it. It's better suited as a reference book. 7/10; reference for all ranks

\*\*\*Volume 5: Attack and Defense\*\*\*

Book #2 in the must-read category for kyu players. The fundamentals of attack and defense taught by this book are so...fundamental that every kyu should read it if they can. The concept of attacking for profit rather than killing is something that all kyus should drill into their heads. The book also goes over an array of attacking techniques and principles that are widely applicable to practically every game one plays. Like Lessons in the Fundamentals of Go, this book also has a high re-read value that truly makes it a valuable asset to any Go player's library. 10/10; 10k-2d

### Volume 6: The Endgame

I don't own this book, but I read through it when it was a part of my high school's small Go library. It's not bad as a guide for how to proceed through endgame, but might be a little hard for lower SDKs to digest. Even so, it has a lot of good information that SDK players should expose themselves to. 7.5/10; 5k-3d

## Mastering the Basics—Richard Bozulich and Rob van Zeijst

### \*\*\*Volume 2: One Thousand and One Life and Death Problems\*\*\*

Looking back, I think this book single-handedly carried me from 7k to 4k in terms of strength within about 1-2 months. I think I was around 7k when I started going through it in July of 2008 and just started winning a lot more games, going 16-2 when I got to 6k, and including a 16 game win streak (which still stands today as my record) going through part of my time as a 5k. I went through a good chunk of this book while I was at Boy Scout Summer Camp one week that month. It's really nifty, as you can just do a few problems here and there when there's some downtime, which really does add up quite quickly. After I got back home, I played some games on KGS and won some 10 ranked games in a row. Bottom line: doing life and death problems is really important (as if you haven't heard that before), and you can really make huge leaps by doing lots of them. 9.5/10; 7k-1k; highly recommend as a tsumego book

### Volume 7: Attacking and Defending Moyos

This book is split into three sections: one explaining principles, one giving examples from pro games, and one presenting problems. I kind of have mixed (but mostly positive) feelings about this book. I feel like the principles hit most of the important aspects of the topic, but I don't really remember feeling like this book helped me significantly. I think what the book teaches is really key and important for becoming a stronger player with the first part alone, and the rest is sort of supplementary. Maybe I'll go through this book again sometime. 8/10; 1d+

## Get Strong at Go—Richard Bozulich

Just so I don't have to repeat myself over and over again, all of the books in this series follow a problem-based format.

### Get Strong at the Opening

This book isn't that bad, but I don't really remember getting a lot out of it. 6/10; 5k-1k

### Get Strong at Joseki 1

This book focuses on the 3-4 point. Unfortunately, I lost this book some time during my Personal Finance class in 8th grade. I don't think one should study joseki in this manner, but it's not *that* bad I guess. 4.5/10; 5k+; would not recommend

### Get Strong at Joseki 2

This book focuses on the 5-4 and 3-5 points. Like GSAJ 1, I don't really think this book is very helpful, especially for kyu players. 4.5/10; 5k+; would not recommend

### Get Strong at Joseki 3

This book focuses on the 4-4 point. Like GSAJ 1 and 2, I don't really think this book is very helpful, especially for kyu players. I remember finding this particular one really boring for some reason. 4/10; 5k+; would not recommend

### Get Strong at Invading

I think this was actually the first book of the series that I read. It's not bad, although probably in the same tier as Get Strong at Opening: there isn't much direction in what aspect of invasions the book is trying to teach you, so it might be hard to apply concepts rather than particular situations from the problems to your games. That said, I think a number of the situations in the problems presented in the book are rather common, so in that respect it's not bad. 6/10; 5k-2d

### **\*\*\*Get Strong at Tesuji\*\*\***

Book #3 in my top-tier list. This book is basically the successor to Tesuji from the Elementary Go series and can basically carry someone to dan level. The problems cover a wide range of levels and topics, from shape to close combat to other things. Idk what else to really say about it; I really liked it and reread it numerous times. 10/10; 3k-3d

### Get Strong at the Endgame

This book is split into three sections: endgame tesujis, problems involving calculating the value of moves, and small-board problems where you find the best moves and calculate the score for both sides. The tesuji section of the book is really fun to go through because you're introduced to a lot of nifty sequences to net an extra point here and there that you can apply to real games. The second section is extremely tedious but extremely rewarding if you're patient to go through them all (which I have yet to be and probably should revisit). The third section is even more tedious and gets pretty hard towards the end. However, when all is said and done, it's a pretty good book for learning endgame. 8/10; 3k+

### Get Strong at Life and Death

I can't find this book anymore. I'm pretty sure it was in my house somewhere last I saw it but unfortunately, I seem to have misplaced it. I don't remember too much about it either, which makes it hard for me to fairly judge this book.

### Get Strong at Handicap Go

I actually don't even remember opening this book. I might have flipped through some pages and glanced at a few problems but I didn't have any interest in handicap Go at this point so I never read it. Therefore, I don't really know what rating I would give it.

### Get Strong at Attacking

I remember liking this book just slightly more than Get Strong at Invading, but it really is subpar when compared to Attack and Defense from the Elementary Go Series. Basically it runs into the same issues as Get Strong at Invading; not much else to say about it. 6.5/10; 5k-1k

## **The Heart of Go Discovery Series—various authors**

Technically, these books should fall in the category of commented pro games, but they aren't really as in-depth as the books in that section and focus on certain aspects of games instead.

### Volume 1: Perceiving the Direction of Play—Kobayashi Satoru

I picked this book up just recently at the 2014 Go Congress to add to my library, but I have yet to open it. Therefore, I'm going to withhold my judgment on it until I one day take some glances at it (which probably won't be for a long time, sorry!) I can probably say that what I would say about it would probably be similar to what I would say about the other books in this series.

### Volume 2: Catching Scent of Victory—O Rissei

I forget why I got this book, but maybe it was because I liked the title, and I like winning. That said, I don't remember anything about what I read in this book. I'm sure I got something out of it like exposure to some shapes or something, but I can't remember anything in particular. I don't think it's a bad book though (I finished it after all), but there are better books. If you just want to read some pro commentaries (there's 32 partial ones in here), then it's not bad. 6.5/10; 2d-5d

### Volume 5: The Way of Creating a Thick and Strong Game—Hane Naoki

I think my friend Hugh recommended this book to me a few years back. In particular, I like this book more so than volume 2 of this series because it is more thorough and focused. There are 37 games in this book, although most of them are only commented up to the middle game, but it's fairly sufficient for the purpose of this book. I don't remember much about it other than that it was my bedtime reading for a period of time, but I would treat it as focused pro commentary. If the title interests you, give it a go; but I wouldn't say it's an urgent book for your library. 7/10; 2d-5d

## **Shuko: The Only Move—Fujisawa Shuko**

### Volume 1: Joseki/Fuseki Collection

One could put this series as tsumego books, but it's a little different from the typical tesuji or life and death books, so it's getting its own category. This book consists of 80 fuseki problems, each one stemming from a pro game. I opened this book a few times while on the toilet, but I don't think I got very far before I dropped it. After taking another look at it just now, I think this book isn't that bad and has interesting explanations and problems. I'd say it's worth a read-through. 7/10; 3d-6d

### Volume 2: Fighting Middlegame Collection

Okay this one, I'll admit I can't recall ever opening (until 1/7/15). However, I'm going to assume it's of similar quality to the first volume, so I'll provisionally give it the same rating until I one day go through it. 7/10; 3d-6d

## Dan-Level Tsumego Books

Liping Huang's Problem Series Volume 1—Liping Huang and Nancy Xu

I'll admit I never actually went through this entire book, although I don't remember why. Looking at it again briefly, the problems (there are 114 of them split into three levels) are pretty classic ones that you would probably find in a lot of other life and death books with pretty practical tesujis. 7.5/10; 1d-5d

Train Like a Pro 1/Train Like a Pro 2—Kim Sung-rae

This series consists of two books; the second simply being different sets of problems from the first, hence I lumped them together. The concept of the book is actually pretty cool: it's split into "days", each consisting of 4 of each tesuji, opening, life and death, joseki, 2 "guess the next move of a pro game" problems, and a 13x13 whole-board endgame problem where you are supposed to find the best moves and calculate the final scores. Each book contains 30 days of materials, which means a total of 1140 problems. The quality of the problems are pretty good and suitable for dan-level players and get progressively harder (I think). The solutions come in a separate book, which is kind of cool and kind of not cool, as it discourages anxious flipping before actually expending considerable effort to solve a tough problem. On the other hand, it is a little inconvenient, but I guess that's ok. However, there are only answers in the solution book with only one diagram each, which means that if your answer is wrong, you have to figure out why, as there are no explanations to help you. I remember trying to follow the day schedule the book gives you to try and finish both books before a tournament, but I ended up stopping at some point in the second book. I'll probably go through these books again one day. 8/10; 3d+

Graded Go Problems for Dan Players Volume 2: 300 Tesuji Problems (3k-3d)—Nihon Kiin/Kiseido

I did this book when I was 3d so it's hard to say I got a lot of value out of it because it was rather easy for me at the time and I could finish the whole book over the course of a day. That said, it compliments Get Strong at Tesuji and is still a good book just to sharpen your tactical intuition and ingrain some of the more basic tesujis into your head. I think weaker players would get good value out of this problem set. 8.5/10; 3k-2d

**\*\*\*Graded Go Problems for Dan Players Volume 4: 300 Life and Death Problems (4d-7d) —Nihon Kiin/Kiseido\*\*\***

Hoo boy. This book is incredibly infuriating because the problems get way harder in the second half of the book. The first 100 or so problems aren't so bad for a 5d, but then they just taking longer and longer to solve. I have yet to finish this book (I've picked it up and dropped it multiple times), but I think thoroughly going through all of the problems in it multiple times will be really useful for improving one's reading ability. 10/10; 5d+

**\*\*\*Graded Go Problems for Dan Players Volume 5: 300 Tesuji Problems (4d-7d) —Nihon Kiin/Kiseido\*\*\***

Like volume 4, this book is just as excellent. The problems are a little bit easier to go through, but honestly to be able to internalize the answers is really hard. I went through this book the first time back in 2013 whenever I was waiting for the bus after school/while I was on the bus going back home. Just

recently I picked it up again, and I still can't find most of the answers instinctively. When you can do that, I think your tactical sense in games will be razor sharp. 10/10; 5d+

Graded Go Problems for Dan Players Volume 7: 256 Opening and Middle Game Problems (1d-7d)  
—Nihon Kiin/Kiseido

I actually got this volume before volumes 4 and 5 (it came out before them) back in 2013. It's a pretty good book, but like other opening problem books, sometimes the answers can be a little subjective and I'm sure there are other possibilities for solutions. I actually remember looking at some of the problems with Hugh Zhang 7d, and he was raising his eyebrows at some of the answers. It's still definitely not a bad problem set though and worth a reread or two. 8/10; 4d+

Igo Hatsuyoron volume 1—Inoue Dosetsu Inseki

Ha.Ha.Ha. Yea...this book is too hard. Not even going to bother with it for a long long time unless there's a special reason to. I guess it's fun to have though. 8/10 as a collectible; 1.5/10 as practical study material; 10/10 as tryhard material if you're at least 7d; 7d+

## Commented Pro Games

Commented Games by Lee Sedol I—Lee Sedol and Lee Sena

If there's one book on commented pro games you should get, it should be this one. The commentary is extremely thorough and insightful. However, what I like most about this book are the quotes under each figure about Lee Sedol's thoughts pertaining to that point in time in the game. The side stories interspersed throughout the games about Lee Sedol's childhood are also quite interesting to read about. In fact, they were so interesting to read about that I think I had skipped through the book to read them all together before going back to the game commentary. I got this book before it was even officially released in English at the 2012 AGA Pro qualifier finals and finished it the month after, reading it on the airplane ride back to Maryland after the Go Congress, on the airplane to Lille for the 2012 World Mind Sports Games a few days after, and I think I finished it on the way back. There are three commented games in this volume. If there's any other incentive to get this book, it's that the third game is in fact the game used in Hikaru no Go (SMALL SPOILER??) when Hikaru plays against Ko Yongha towards the end of the manga. Read the manga yourself if you want to know who was who. ;) 9/10; 4d+

Commented Games by Lee Sedol II—Lee Sedol and Lee Sena

I believe this book came out a year later, and I was able to pick it up at the 2013 Go Congress. I haven't yet finished the book (it's probably next on my list and is sitting on my desk shelf in my dorm at the moment), but it's of similar stellar quality as the first volume. Maybe I'll write a little more about it after I finish it. 9/10; 4d+

Winning a Won Game—Go Seigen

So I have this big problem with wrapping up games where I'm ahead after opening/early middle game, and then proceed to throw the game one way or another by doing something stupid. The title of this book seemed quite appropriate, no? Of course, there is a difference between thrashing to kill a big

group to make your opponent resign, and playing solidly to sustain a lead that is insurmountable. Most amateurs don't resign when they're behind by a few points even if there's no realistic way to catch up. Winning a won game takes a lot of positional judgment and counting skills to accurately judge what kind of strategy is best to take in the latter part of the game. I remember reading this book around May/June of 2013 while sitting in my high school chemistry teacher's room when I was visiting friends after being done with classes. The book is fairly interesting to read, as it uses language in the form of a dialogue between Go Seigen and Mr. X (an amateur player I presume). The two go over 10 of Go Seigen's games. I don't think you'll really make a big jump in your ability to "win a won game" after reading this book, but it's still not bad of a book just as commentaries on some of Go Seigen's games. 6/10; 3d+

#### The Go Consultants—John Fairbairn and T Mark Hall

I think I finished this book? I honestly can't remember. Anyways, this book is a solid 150-page commentary about a single(!) rengo game between Suzuki Tamejiro and Segoe Kensaku against Kitani Minoru and Go Seigen. I don't remember too much other than the book other than that I had read it in the family room of my house at some point. There's a lot of narration and quotes from the four players about their consultation, which makes it fairly entertaining to read. The commentary is very thorough and pretty much move-by-move. That said, the only thing I remember taking away from this book was a cool move in the upper left corner (look up the game or buy the book if you want to know what I'm talking about!). It's still a pretty entertaining read though. 7/10; 1d+

#### Invincible: The Games of Shusaku—John Power

Many thanks to my friend Ben at [BenGoZen](#) who generously traded me this *HARDCOVER* book in exchange for two graded go problems for dan players volumes that I bought separately. There is a TON of historical background about almost all of the top players during the Edo period, the politics at the time, and so much more. It's truly THE book to get for people interested in Shusaku's era. There's also a ton of commented games, including Shusaku's famous 19 castle games and many more. That said, I never went past the opening historical background chapters for a long time after getting this book until Fall of 2014, where I finally cracked down and read/replayed through all of the Castle Games. I'm not sure what to say about the educational study value of this book, as while Shusaku was a top player of his time, a lot of the openings during that time are almost completely irrelevant now. Even though the middle game is more relevant, I just feel like the strength of top modern pros exceeds the quality of games played back then. I'm not sure if I'll go back to this book for studying games except for fun, as in my opinion studying modern games is more beneficial. 10/10 as a collectible; 7.5/10 as study material; 5d+; recommended to all interested in Shusaku and/or the Edo period of Go.

## Reference Books and Dictionaries

#### A Dictionary of Basic Tesuji Volume 3: Tesuji for the Opening, For Capturing Races, and For Life and Death Problems, Part 1—Fujisawa Shuko

I opened this book a few times, and then never revisited it. I think it's cool for when you want to look at some nifty stuff I guess. Also because tesuji is a timeless aspect of the game (as opposed to opening and joseki dictionaries), it's not a bad dictionary to have. 7.5/10; 3k+

A Dictionary of Basic Tesuji Volume 4: Tesuji for Life and Death Part 2, and For the Endgame—Fujisawa Shuko

The endgame section of this book is actually quite cool and compliments the tesuji section in Get Strong at Endgame. Maybe I'll revisit these dictionaries some time, but like volume 3, it's not a bad dictionary to have in the library. 7.5/10; 3k+

The 21st Century Dictionary of Basic Joseki, Volume One—Takao Shinji

This volume deals with 3-4 corner josekis. Okay, so at first I really wanted to get this book because my joseki knowledge absolutely sucks. However, after I've gotten it, I've run into a problem where when I'm looking up a joseki, the book doesn't have the variation I'm looking for. A lot has changed since the book was published in 2011, and some of the variations in this book have already become outdated. Imo, studying modern games is a better way to study modern joseki than getting a dictionary. 6.5/10; 5d+

The 21st Century Dictionary of Basic Joseki, Volume Two—Takao Shinji

This volume covers 4-4, 3-5, 5-4, and 3-3 josekis. I'll admit I kind of only got this book to complete the set. I've opened it probably about once ever since I got it (it was expensive too). Like volume one however, I feel like some of the joseki in this dictionary is already outdated by modern pro standards. 6.5/10; 5d+

## Miscellaneous Books

Improve Your Intuition Volume 1: Intuition in the Opening—Takagawa Kaku

This series consists of 3 small volumes (each is under 50 pages) that were originally published in Go Review, a Nihon Kiin publication. This volume goes over a number of basic opening principles and makes a good refresher for low dan players and pretty good material for mid-kyu players. I actually quite like the format of this book; basically it explains principles and then gives practical examples. That said, it's not the most thorough book, but it does fairly well with what it presents. 7/10; 7k-2k

Improve Your Intuition Volume 3: Part 2: How to Reduce a Moyo—Takagawa Kaku

Like the first volume, this one also follows the same format in presenting some principles and then giving practical examples, which is really nice. I still don't remember this book having a huge impact on my improvement, but looking at it again, it looks pretty decent. The topics in my opinion are more beneficial for slightly stronger players compared to the first volume. 7/10; 5k-2d

The Best Play: In-Depth Game Analyses—Feng Yun

I'm pretty sure I read this book while I was on the toilet. This book is basically just commentary on two amateur low-mid dan games by Feng Yun. I guess the commentary is not bad, but I don't think you'll get a ton in particular out of this book. 6/10; 5k-1k

### Come Up to Shodan—Rin Kaiho

This book is another compilation from Go Review and goes over three amateur games (two between kyus and one between 1ds) and thoroughly explains the mistakes made. I guess it's okay, but there are way more useful books one can get to improve. 5/10; 5k-1k

### Go Problems for Kyu Players Volume 4: Whole Board Problems—William Cobb

This is a small pocket-sized book containing about 21 problems. The problems are not bad, although I don't think you would be able to take a lot of this book. 5.5/10; 5k-1d

### Golden Opportunities—Rin Kaiho

This was another book that I remember reading a lot on the toilet. I honestly can't remember anything that I took away from the book, but there are a lot of interesting historical stories accompanied by some nifty tesuji examples. Questionable Go educational value, but interesting book I guess. 5.5/10 (add two points if you want to read it for the stories); 3k+

### New Moves—Alexander Dinerchtein and An Younggil

I actually don't "own" this book per se; it was lent to me by my friend Edward Zhang, and I have yet to return it. xD This book is basically about trick moves or unusual joseki variations, which Dinerchtein and An then discuss. I really don't recommend studying this book because many of the moves suggested in this book are in fact bad style and will get you screwed over if your opponent knows the refutation. In addition, the moves depend a lot on the whole board (they present each with one board example), and if you don't know what you're doing and blindly play the unusual move in a real game, if the surroundings are slightly different you could be left in a bad position either way. The only redeeming feature of this book in my eyes is that you can read about how Dinerchtein and An judge positions. 3/10; 3k-3d; would not recommend

### Understanding How to Play Go—Yuan Zhou

Who doesn't want to understand how to play Go? In this book, Yuan Zhou 7d reviews some of his games against other high-dan players. The commentary is clear and thorough, which is a plus. However, there isn't a lot of lasting value towards improving your own strength, as it's hard to apply the commentary to your own games. In addition, I feel like the material isn't a high enough level to provide for sufficient study for mid-high dan level players. That said, I do think it's a decent book for kyu players looking to try and understand dan-level games, although it's not as important as improving reading ability through life and death and tesuji problems. The difference between this and a mid-high dan reading commentary on pro games is that at a higher level, whole-board judgment and flow becomes a lot more important, which can be obtained by reviewing pro games. At the kyu level, simply improving your reading ability is sufficient towards becoming a dan player. 6.5/10; 3k-1d

### How to Play Handicap Go—Yuan Zhou

I remember originally wanting to get this book because I was playing in the monthly Tiger's Mouth tournaments, which gave out book certificates as prizes. Because it was always a handicapped

tournament, I wanted to get better at handicap games so I could win more. Of course, in my opinion, studying handicap games is not really a good way to improve your strength at even games, because the moves played in handicap games are often either overplays or slack. Nevertheless, if you want one book about handicap games, this one is not bad. 7/10 if you're interested in handicap games; 3.5/10 otherwise; 3k-2d

#### Lee Changho's Novel Plays and Shapes—Lee Changho

After flipping through the book again, I just noticed that a chunk of the book is out of order \*shrugs\*. Anyway, I think I got this book because I wanted to learn more about cool moves or something. However, this book is kind of more of a joseki book about "new" (in the context of the year 2000) moves and analyzes them. The analysis is pretty thorough, but as I think I said somewhere before, books are in my opinion not the ideal way to study joseki. 5/10; 4d-6d

#### A Dictionary of Modern Fuseki: The Korean Style—Seolim Publishing Company

If you scroll down further, you'll see that I have a sub-section for reference books and dictionaries. However, this book is so old (published in 2000) that it doesn't really deserve to go in that section anymore. I actually have a kind of funny story about this book. In the Fall of 2008, I participated in a UMBC tournament (I was 3k at the time), my second real-life tournament ever. I won all three of my games, which won me one book from a selection at a table. I really wanted this book out of all of the ones there, so I was really excited at the conclusion of the tournament. The prizes were announced from the bottom division up, and in the division right before mine (I think), the winner took this book, leaving me feeling rather disappointed (I was 13 at the time). I think I ended up getting Understanding How to Play Go instead, but in the back of my mind I still wanted to get this book. Fast forward about five years later, where I finally got my hands on the book. I believe I opened it once or twice and then dropped it. It's so old that komi had been changed to 6.5 from 5.5 (under Japanese rules) after the book was published. Openings and josekis have changed so much over the past decade and a half that many of the variations have become almost obsolete. If you want to study openings (at the dan level, so not just basic principles), look at modern pro games instead. 2/10; 1k-1d

#### A Way of Play in the 21st Century—Go Seigen

What do I remember most about this book? Falling asleep and never finishing it. Anyway, I think I got this book because it was by Go Seigen and I was interested in studying his games and stumbled upon this book when picking out a prize after a TM tournament. Anyway, it's basically another opening book, although pretty outdated in terms of modern styles (this book was published in 1997). The language in the explanations are also sort of dry, but Go Seigen's small excerpts about his thoughts on Go as a game at the beginning of each chapter are pretty interesting to read. I can't say that reading this book will improve your Go a great deal, but it is okay for seeing Go Seigen's insights and judgments about certain positions. 5.5/10; 1k-4d

#### Jungsuk in Our Time—Seo Beong-soo and Jung Dong-sik

Ahh...yea I got this book too when I was around 5d and wanted to improve my joseki knowledge. Unfortunately, this book, like several of the others on my list, as published over a decade ago (2000) and has since been rendered somewhat obsolete in the face of modern Go. That's not saying that these old books are necessarily bad, but rather that they don't consider modern variations that have

become more popular lately. In addition, with WeiqiTV being accessible online and daily updates of pro game records, joseki books have become less helpful as a print form. I just found that I still have a bookmark smack in the middle of this book, so maybe I'll finish it someday just for the sake of finishing it. 4/10; 5d+

### 21st Century New Openings Volume 1—Kim Sung-rae

This book was published in...oh wait! You can't even find the publishing date in the book for some reason. After doing some research online, I think the publishing date is 2008 and that the English version was not translated later than the Korean version, but that they were published at the same time. You might still be able to guess what I am going to say about this book based on the previous couple books. Looking at the second volume on Sensei's Library, the first sentence says, "Originally Kim Sung-rae planned to write one Fuseki book every 3 years, but due to a great deal of new developments since the first book he decided to publish the 2nd one earlier than planned." So yes, the book is already outdated, even though it was only published 6-7 years ago (which when you think about is still a long time). I would say that it's still ok for the average amateur to study however, considering how it was at least published after komi was changed. That said, I still think it's not the most efficient way to study opening, and that watching/reading commentaries of modern pro games is much better. 6/10; 4d-5d

### **\*\*Positional Judgment—Cho Chikun\*\***

I haven't really fully grasped the concepts of this book yet, but I think it's a really good book about a very important topic, as positional judgment becomes increasingly important at the mid-dan level. I think I've gone through it once before, but I don't remember much about it and am currently slowly making my way through it again. I think it's definitely valuable for any mid-dan level player. 9/10; 5d+

### Go as Communication: The Educational and Therapeutic Value of the Game of Go—Yasutoshi Yasuda

Okay this book isn't actually about improving your strength, but rather talks about the educational (non Go-related) value that Go as a game has on both young and elderly people, and methods of how to promote Go. It's a pretty interesting read for those Go promoters out there.

## **Other Books I Have Read but Don't Own**

The following books were borrowed from my local club's library.

### **\*\*The Direction of Play—Kajiwara Takeo\*\***

I think I read this book the first time when I was around 1d (aka a long time ago), and I wish I had it around to read again because I feel like I would get a lot more out of it on a second read-through. Direction of play is a very valuable skill as one goes through the dan ranks, and this book does a pretty decent job of teaching that and has a similar reread value as that of Attack and Defense. 9/10; 1d+

### **\*\*Reducing Territorial Frameworks—Fujisawa Shuko\*\***

If there's one book you should get during your SDK days (I think I read it when I was around 5k) about reducing those pesky moyos, it should be this one. While the language is a little dry, it does the job at introducing moyo-reducing techniques and invasion principles. It's also a good book to reread after you hit shodan, as you can probably gain a little more understanding in terms of positional judgment. It's written in a similar format as *Attack and Defense* and *The Direction of Play* (if my memory serves me correctly), which I think is a good format for these types of concept books. 8.5/10; 5k-5d

#### Vital Points and Skillful Finesse for Sabaki—Norimoto Yoda

So I remember at one point, some of my friends and I would watch Chen Zhaonian (you might know him as zchen or zyoda) play on KGS and we would all type "FINESSE" into the chat after he won a game. That might have been my motivator for picking up this book. I think I remember it being written in a similar format to *The Heart of Go* Discovery series (they have the same publisher), aka it presents some positions from pro games and goes over them in relation to the book's overall topic. I guess it's kind of a cool book for introducing some sabaki techniques and a sort of light and flexible way of thinking, but it's kind of hard to apply in your own games because it requires a lot of fighting skills, good reading ability, and good positional judgment. That said, it's not too bad as an introductory book to sabaki. 7/10; 3k-4d

## Go World and Other English Publications

### \*\*\*Go World issues 1-104, 107-112, 114, 125-129—The Ishi Press and Kiseido\*\*\*

Go World is an English magazine consisting of 129 issues spaced between 1977 and 2012. It is available both as a print magazine as well as in PDF form through four DVDs. Each issue is 64 pages (with the exception of a couple special ones) and contains news on the professional scene (mostly Japan's but later on some of the international tournaments as well some of China's and Korea's), commented pro games, articles on various Go topics and general news, and some tsumego. I had the fortune of being able to purchase issues 1-93 in print for \$50 from a guy (if you recall selling your Go World collection to a little kid, please let me know so I can thank you again!) at the 2010 New Jersey Open who was selling a ton of his Go books for ridiculously cheap prices (like \$3-\$5 a book). Yes, \$50 for 93 issues, not including some additional duplicate issues. The early issues have long been out of print and are collectors' items now. I've been trying for some time to complete my collection, but buying single issues on Kiseido's website is a little pricey, so I'll probably just be looking for some future opportunities like winning KGS+ tournaments or something. If you're looking to buy some issues yourself and are an AGA member, you can purchase a selection of back issues for \$1-\$3 each [here](#). Otherwise, they are also available to everyone at Kiseido's [website](#), but only for issues 72-129. They did throw in a few extra issues when I got a couple after winning a KGS+ tournament recently, which was really nice of them.

Anyways, enough background talk. Go World is a really good magazine for Go educational material. I got some issues through an AGA membership promotion a long time ago back when I was somewhere around 2d in late 2009. I was having some trouble and kind of hit a plateau at the time as the 2010 New Jersey Open was coming up in February of 2010. I started reading some of the pro game commentaries shortly before the tournament (maybe the week before, but I remember for sure during the three and a half hour car ride up), and had some sort of epiphany. I proceeded to go 5-0 at the tournament and won a nice \$100, half of which I spent to buy the guy's box of Go Worlds, and the other half to contribute to the trip's road toll and tournament registration cost. About two months later, I finally broke through to 3d on KGS, after being 2d for nine months, which had been my longest time

spent at a rank up to that time. In short, I think the pro game commentaries in Go World are really valuable in broadening your perspective as you hit the dan ranks and begin learning how to properly play Go with a higher-level feeling for the flow of the game. That said, I think that once you become 7d, it's more beneficial to just read/watch modern (as in the most recent) commentaries with the newest innovations and variations, as Go World has stopped being published. 10/10, 2d-6d; invaluable for collectors of historical Go news!

*Go Winds* Volume 9 Number 3 & 4—Yutopian Enterprises

I believe Kiseido and Yutopian share warehouses or are sister companies or something, but correct me on that if I'm wrong. *Go Winds* is a series of translated Chinese and Japanese articles about their respective professional scenes, and an assortment of other articles about various Go topics. Basically, it's like a mini-Go World. I think I got it when they threw it in for free after I had bought some other books from Kiseido and Yutopian. There's really not too much else to say about it, which isn't even really enough for me to give it a rating or anything. If you want to learn more about it, you can look at [this section](#) of Yutopian's website, which also includes some PDFs of issues.

## Chinese Books and Publications

Let me preface this section by saying that my Chinese reading ability is pretty lackluster, and that while I can get by tsumego books fine as well as tesuji/life and death dictionaries with minimal difficulty, it takes me a really long time to go through commented pro games because I have to spend a lot of time processing sentences in my mind and then looking up words if they are key to the meaning and I don't know them. Sometimes what I know is enough to get the jist of what the author is trying to say, but it's still tedious to go through books with a lot of text. Thanks in advance to Sensei's Library (<http://senseis.xmp.net/?ChineseGoBooks>) for helping me with translations of titles.

\*\*\*李昌镐精讲围棋死活 (Lee Changho's Selected Life and Death Problems)—Lee Changho\*\*\*

This is series of 6 volumes of increasing difficulty, each with around 123 problems. I'd say that the first three volumes are SDK level, and latter three volumes are dan level. This is a great set to get for tsumego practice (if you do buy it, buy the whole set at once instead of individual volumes), particularly once you hit the dan levels. Definitely worth multiple run-throughs until you have mastered all of the problems! 10/10; 1d+

\*\*\*李昌镐精讲围棋手筋 (Lee Changho's Selected Tesuji Problems)—Lee Changho\*\*\*

This is also a series of 6 volumes of generally increasing difficulty, each with around 123 problems. I'd say that the first three volumes are SDK level, the fourth volume is DDK/SDK level (it's just about nets, throw-ins, and squeezes and took me around 15 minutes to do the whole book when I was around 4d-5d or so), and the fifth and sixth volumes are dan level. Like the Life and Death set, these problems (particularly those in the fifth and sixth volumes) are great sets to practice tesuji once you master the problems in *Get Strong at Tesuji*. 10/10; 1d+

坂田荣男围棋全集 (全十二册) (Sakato Eio Perfect Weiqi Collection)—Sakata Eio

This is a set of 12 books; the first nine are about different areas of Go, and the latter three are small collections of commented pro games. I asked my mom if she could buy me this set for my birthday (I think in 2012) when she went back to visit China. My good friend Calvin Sun 1p recommended these books when I was asking about what good Chinese books there were that were worth getting. Ricky Zhao 7d also praised these books as really good when we were walking by the vendors at the 2014 Go Congress and talking about Go books. Now unfortunately, these books are rather text heavy and thus take me a really long time to read and understand (I'm still only 50 pages into the first volume after all this time). Thus, I can't really say too much about this series as I haven't even opened the other 11 volumes, but if you can read Chinese, you can rest assured that they're probably decent books, as they were recommended by Calvin Sun 1p.

### 围棋死活辞典(上卷) (Cho Chikun's Life and Death Dictionary)—Cho Chikun

In the summer of 2012, my good friend Yunxuan Li went to the Ge Yuhong Dao Chang (Ge Dao), a Go school in Beijing. He asked me if I wanted any books, so I told him that if really wanted to, he could get me whatever he wanted, although preferably not text-heavy. So at the 2012 Go Congress, he gave me this book and the two right below it, and I gave him an SAT book. Anyways, this book is the first half of the Cho Chikun's Life and Death Dictionary. I actually read through the whole thing while waiting for the bus after school. It's basically a dictionary on all of the basic life and death shapes, which is a pretty useful reference for internalizing the shapes by heart. Also, for those wondering, this book is the same as All about Life and Death, which was published in English by Ishi Press. 7.5/10; all ranks

### 围棋手筋辞典(上卷) (A Dictionary of Basic Tesuji)—Fujisawa Shuko

I actually have a funny story about this book. So when I was looking up the book names/author translations for these Chinese books, I realized that this is in fact the same dictionary as the one printed in English in four volumes by Slate and Shell. I had gotten the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> volumes (the second half) of the dictionary a long time ago, and had always meant to get the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> volumes at some point. Coincidentally, Yunxuan had gotten me the first half of the dictionary, which now completes my set! I also went through this whole book at the bus stop/on the bus, and like I said for the latter half of the dictionary, it's a nice dictionary to have for references purposes and as part of a collection. 7.5/10; 3k+

### 围棋发阳论 (Igo Hatsuyoron)—Inoue Dosetsu Inseki

Ahh..not sure if Yunx wanted to kill me when he gave me this one. This problem set is the devil. I'm too scared to open it. Lol jk but as opposed to the English version I have, this one book has the entire problem set, whereas the English version is just the first third. Yep, still not going to touch it until I've mastered every other tsumego set I already have. 1.5/10 as practical study material; 10/10 as tryhard material if you're at least 7d; 7d+

### \*\*\*围棋棋经众妙 (Gokyo Shumyo)—Hayashi Genbi\*\*\*

I think I got this book along with several others in my 2009 China trip (my only one thus far in my life). I don't actually think I knew it was Gokyo Shumyo at the time, but just got it for whatever reason. It's a classic tsumego collection on life and death/tesuji, and while I think it's one of the easier sets of the classics (meaning low-mid dan), it's definitely worth going through. 10/10; 1d-5d

### 围棋小辞典全套6册(布局) (Weiqi Small Dictionary Series—Opening)—Chengdu Shidai Publishing

I think I found this book (and the Tesuji one) in some store in a subway in China when I went in 2009. If you don't know, Go books are pretty cheap in China (like 12-48 RMB/~\$2-\$8 USD). These dictionaries are pocket-sized, but still over 300 pages each and were only 12 RMB, so at the time I figured why not get them. I haven't read through this book at all, but just by flipping through the pages, it looks pretty detailed and thorough.

围棋小辞典全套6册(手筋) (Weiqi Small Dictionary Series—Tesuji)—Chengdu Shidai Publishing

Similar to the above book (the Opening one), I haven't read it, but it looks decent judging from a flip-through. It's not very high on my to-read list though, so I probably won't be updating this blurb anytime soon.

围棋死活1000题 (Weiqi Life and Death 1000 Problems)—Wang Zhipeng

This book is probably one of the most popular Chinese Go books that people in America would know of (you might recognize it if you saw the cover). I've never actually gone through the whole book, but looking at the problems again they don't look bad. There is only one diagram per solution, so you need to do the heavy-lifting to figure out why your wrong answers are wrong. The problems are divided by "stars" kind of like Get Strong at Tesuji, where one-star and two-star problems are around SDK level, and three-star problems are dan level. Not a bad resource for more tsumego! 8.5/10; 5k-5d

快乐围棋练习—业余八级攻略 (Happy Go Practice—8k level)—Yu Wenyu and Zhang Weizhu

Okay, I don't know what a proper translation of the title would be, but this is basically what literally means. So when I was in China in 2009, I was at the mall one day with my family and brought this book around (I might have bought it there; I don't remember, but I still have the receipt in the book for some reason). Anyways, I went off to some room in the corner of a bookstore to read it while I was waiting for the rest of my family to finish shopping, as it was quiet and had a couch. I ended up falling asleep at some point, and later awoke a little dazed. I stepped outside the bookstore and at some point found my family frantically rushing over to me. It turns out they couldn't find me and asked the mall police to page for me over the intercom. Yea..whoops. I don't know why I got the 8k-level version (I was 2d at the time), but I'd say the problems are a bit harder than 8k-level, but still definitely SDK level. The format of the book is kind of like that in Train Like a Pro, but with easier problems. 7/10; 5k-2k

围棋阶梯训练1000题:中级篇 (Step by Step Go Training 1000 Problems: Intermediate Level)—Wu Yulin

This book is mostly life and death problems with 71 whole-board opening/middle-game problems towards the end. Like most of the other Chinese books, the solutions are pretty concise with only one diagram each. This book says it's only the intermediate level, but I think it's more suitable for at least low-dan players. I think I even saw Eric Lui 8d at a tournament with this book before. I haven't really gone through this book at all either, but hey, it's another 1000 tsumego to work through one day! 8/10; 1d+

阶题围棋教室 从业余3段到业余6段 (Step by Step Go Classroom from 3d to 6d)—Huang Xiwen and Nie Weiping

This book is really big. Like...638 pages big. I was 2d when I got this book from a bookstore in Wangfujing in 2009, along with some other books. Apparently it's part of a four-book series that covers...pretty much all areas of the game? It's a bit too text-heavy for me to read easily so I never really dug into it (also the fact that it's really long contributed to that). I did notice that towards the beginning of the book, it has a list of openings by win percentage (I assume in professional games), which I thought was kind of interesting. I don't actually know too much else about it but you can read more about the series [here](#).

阶梯围棋星级题库 从业余6段到专业棋手 (Step by Step Go Classroom from 6d to Professional Player)—Huang Xiwen and Nie Weiping

This book is from a slightly different sub-series from the book above (as I understand now, five and a half years after getting it) and is supposed to be a problem book. What's interesting about it (after flipping through the pages) is that it's not focused on life and death or tesuji, but rather on whole-board positions assumingly taken from pro games. It looks pretty interesting, but I probably won't touch it for a long, long time. Like the book above, if you want to learn more about this series, you can go [here](#).

围棋 (Go)

Uhh so...at the end of the 2010 New Jersey Open tournament, the guy I bought the box of Go Worlds from gave me a bunch of these Chinese Go magazines (you can see pictures of them on my Facebook page) from the 1980s for free. It appears to be a monthly publication (yes that is the actual title on the cover) with content topics similar to Go World, but I can't seem to find any more information about it online.

\*\*\*围棋天地 (*The World of Weiqi*)\*\*\*

This is a semi-monthly magazine that is still published in China. Each issue is a bit over 100 pages long and has some color pages as well! To be honest, it's basically a better version of Go World with more commentaries, articles, and higher quality magazine binding. It's also pretty much dirt cheap if you were to buy it in China (12 RMB/\$2 USD). To be honest, it is probably one of the best Go publications out there if you can read Chinese, as it is constantly updated with modern variations in the professional scene. Yunxuan bought me the 7/15/12 issue when he went to China in 2012, and while I can't really read it well, it feels really nice. 10/10; 2d+

## Epilogue

Before I give my more concise list of books that I would advise people read, I would like to just say that just because I didn't find a book that educational or rated it low, that does not mean I didn't gain anything from reading the book (for those that I still finished). After reading so many books, I probably still gained some knowledge from even the worse ones. In addition, some of the low ratings are because I believe there are more efficient methods to improvement for certain levels, but not necessarily because the book itself was bad (although it could have been). The books listed below are the ones that I think are MOST important and conducive for improvement. There are others that I rated somewhat highly but are not included in the list below because I felt that they either weren't entirely necessary or as essential as the ones listed. The following list also does represent a loose order that you should read the books in.

30k-10k:

- [My written guide for 30k-10k](#)
- Opening Theory Made Easy (I didn't list this book above because I never fully read it nor did I ever own it, but it's good) by Otake Hideo
- Lessons in the Fundamentals of Go by Toshiro Kageyama
- Do beginner-level Go problems wherever, doesn't have to be from a book
- Play a lot of games

9k-1k:

- Attack and Defense by Ishida Akira and James Davies
- 1001 Life and Death Problems by Richard Bozulich
- Reducing Territorial Frameworks by Fujisawa Shuko
- Get Strong at Tesuji by Richard Bozulich
- Graded Go Problems for Dan Players Volume 1: 300 Life and Death Problems (3k-3d)—Nihon Kiin/Kiseido (I've never picked this one up, but it's probably just as good as volume 2)
- Graded Go Problems for Dan Players Volume 2: 300 Tesuji Problems (3k-3d)—Nihon Kiin/Kiseido
- Get Strong at the Endgame
- Reread Attack and Defense again as you get towards 1k
- Reread Lessons in the Fundamentals of Go

1d-4d

- The Direction of Play by Kajiwara Takeo
- Go World magazines (or just start reading commented pro games)
- Reread Attack and Defense one more time (maybe around 2d)
- Redo Get Strong at Tesuji again at 3d
- Reread Reducing Territorial Frameworks

- Graded Go Problems for Dan Players Volume 7: 256 Opening and Middle Game Problems (1d-7d) by the Nihon Kiin/Kiseido
- Lee Changho's Selected Life and Death Problems volumes 1-6 by Lee Changho
- Lee Changho's Selected Tesuji Problems volumes 1-6 by Lee Changho
- Xuanxuan Qijing (never done it but it's a classic set)
- Gokyo Shumyo
- Reread Lessons in the Fundamentals of Go
- Positional Judgment by Cho Chikun
- Redo Graded Go Problems for Dan Players volumes 1 and 2 if you can't figure out the answers within 30 seconds each

#### 5d-6d

- Graded Go Problems for Dan Players Volume 4: 300 Life and Death Problems (4d-7d) by the Nihon Kiin/Kiseido
- Graded Go Problems for Dan Players Volume 5: 300 Tesuji Problems (4d-7d) by the Nihon Kiin/Kiseido
- Commented Games by Lee Sedol I, II, and III (when it comes out) by Lee Sedol and Lee Sena
- Reread Lessons in the Fundamentals of Go
- Reread The Direction of Play
- Reread Positional Judgment
- Do other classic tsumego sets other than Igo Hatsuyoron (a list can be found here: <http://senseis.xmp.net/?ClassicalGoProblemBooks>)
- Redo Lee Changho's Selected Life and Death/Tesuji Problems volumes 5-6 if you can't figure out the answers within 30 seconds each
- Redo Graded Go Problems for Dan Players volumes 4 and 5 if you can't figure out the answers within 30 seconds each
- Learn to understand Chinese or Korean if you can't already so you can watch WeiqiTV or BadukTV commentaries

#### 7d+

- Learn to understand Chinese or Korean if you can't already so you can watch WeiqiTV or BadukTV commentaries
- Redo previous life and death/tesuji sets if you don't find them easy by now
- Don't slack on playing serious games and make sure you review them thoroughly afterwards (you should really do this at all levels once you hit SDK)
- Embark on a treacherous journey that is Igo Hatsuyoron.
- ??? Idk lol, can't really speak from experience here, but that's what I would suggest.

Justin Teng is a 6d AGA/6d KGS/8d Tygem Go player who also streams occasionally on Twitch.tv. Find him on [Twitch](#), [Facebook](#), or [Youtube](#)! For a more thorough Go biography, you can click [here](#). For his recommended tsumego sets for all levels, click [here](#).